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THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO BRAND INTEGRATION

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BEN is a global entertainment marketing company delivering premium brand integrations across streaming, TV, film, and influencer programming. Our mission is to connect global brands to consumers through the power of popular entertainment.

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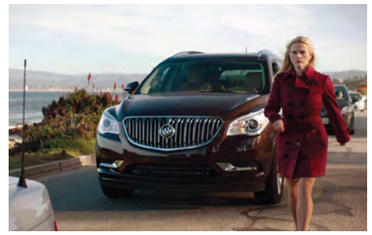
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The practice of brand integration is nothing new. Since the early days of entertainment – and specifically soap operas, daytime television wholly sponsored by brands – it has been an engaging and compelling arrow in a marketer's quiver.

There are many historical markers around brand integration since that time. E.T. and Reese's Pieces. The Bond franchise and multiple brands including Aston Martin and Heineken. FedEx and Wilson in Cast Away. These integrations are considered the gold standards, but thousands and thousands of others may not necessarily grab the headlines but are equally impactful – and sometimes more so.

In the continuum of advertising and entertainment, the VCR began the ad-skipping revolution. From there, DVRs added a more sophisticated layer to ad avoidance. In digital marketing in general, ad blocking continually raises the specter of a brand disappearing into the ether. And today, the rise of streaming, especially with the likes of Netflix and Amazon, which are non ad-supported, puts even more pressure on marketers to get in front of audiences in meaningful ways. Additionally, as social media platforms become a major destination for audiences, influencer marketing has become another essential component of brand integration that marketers need to consider.

However, brand integration, from those early days to this day, remains a tried-and-true valuable opportunity for marketers. As a marketer, brand integration is not merely a "nice to have" anymore. As audiences seek ways to avoid traditional and digital advertising, it has become an incredibly powerful tool.

When long-standing relationships are combined with technology that addresses efficacy and a brand's KPIs in both the entertainment and influencer space, brand integration deserves a closer and more in-depth look.

The goal of this definitive guide from Branded Entertainment Network (BEN) and The Drum is to educate marketers in any industry on how brand integration can be an essential part of a marketing mix. Use it as a reference to understand how your brand can take advantage of this exciting, continually emerging marketing space.



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UNSKIPPABLE. UNBLOCKABLE. UNSTOPPABLE.

Over the past ten years, I've had the good fortune to travel around the world talking with chief marketing officers and their marketing teams about brand integration.

It's been an incredible journey – from the early days of skepticism about the power of social media influencers and a decades-old assumption that getting brands into television and film content was a vanity play, to today's understanding that brand integration is an incredibly effective marketing tool that should be part of every brand's media plan.

Brand integration has become increasingly important in recent years as we have seen a shift in how viewers consume content, with audiences doing everything possible to avoid traditional and digital advertising that disrupts the viewing experience. In fact, by 2017, according to eMarketer, around 27% of Americans installed online ad-blockers. Just recently Google Chrome implemented a code to block certain online advertisements even though digital advertising accounted for more than 86% of the company's $111bn revenue in 2017. On the television side, Fox recently announced it would reduce ad time to two minutes per hour by 2020, while NBCUniversal pledged to cut the number of ads in prime time programming by 20%.

It is safe to say that the future of advertising is inside the content. Brand integration enables marketers to reach consumers in a more authentic and meaningful way. This development means more than getting your brand into TV shows and feature films. It means looking into a variety of content on multiple platforms including influencer content on digital platforms such as Instagram, YouTube and Twitch.tv.

It is certainly time for marketers to start looking at brand integration more seriously. Major companies, including Microsoft, GM, Proximo, Dyson and P&G, have already begun to stake their claim in the streaming landscape. In 2017, 92% of the top 25 streaming shows featured brand integrations. And successful ongoing campaigns on social media platforms like Instagram can provide brands with click-through rates of 10%-13%. As we like to say, brand integration is unskippable, unblockable and unstoppable.

With more than 35 years of experience under our belt, we have learned that the most effective brand integration needs to be planned and executed as a holistic strategy. This guide shares some of the best practices we've picked up along the way. We are confident that you will find it useful, whether you are new to brand integration or a seasoned veteran.

"This development means more than getting your brand into TV shows and feature films. It means looking into a variety of content on multiple platforms including influencer content on digital platforms such as Instagram, YouTube and Twitch.tv."



Ricky Ray Butler
chief executive officer
Branded Entertainment Network (BEN)

BRAND INTEGRATION BY THE NUMBERS

The numbers don't lie. Scripted, unscripted and influencer content continues to see substantial upticks. According to PQ Media, global branded entertainment revenues grew 8% in 2017 to $106bn, and at twice the rate of overall advertising and marketing revenues.

Placement and integration in television is the largest channel at $6.23bn with digital platforms rising the fastest – a 25.3% increase in 2017.

Additionally, as marketing channels face deeper scrutiny over fraud and the use of ad blockers continues to accelerate, brand integration is now on more marketers' radars than ever before.

Here are a few additional stats that tell the integration story.

CONTENT AND AUDIENCE EXPLOSION

$15b
projected investment in streaming original content

$8b + $4.5b + $2.5b

Active users by platform as of 2017

2.2b
1.6b
800m

***Netflix** recently announced that it added* **7.4 million subscribers**

125 million
total worldwide as of March 2018, with ***56.7m*** *of those in the US.*

REACHING THE AD-FREE WORLD

Streaming audiences rival or exceed broadcast.

Streaming's top shows during 2017 included:

Stranger Things **18.5m** *estimated audience Nov*	***Orange is the New Black*** **14.8m** *estimated audience Jun*
13 Reasons Why **14m** *estimated audience May*	***Fuller House*** **10.7m** *estimated audience Nov*

92% *of the top 25 streaming shows during 2017 featured brand integrations.*

70% *of people typically binge-watch shows on Netflix.*

65% *of viewers on Amazon Prime Video and Hulu report the same behavior.*

64% *of viewers prefer streaming or premium cable over broadcast.*

(source: BEN Proprietary Research)

WHAT CMOS ARE SAYING

94% *of CMOs and leading marketers believe that viewers will watch less traditional TV and move towards non ad-supported options such as Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, HBO or Showtime.*

88% *of CMOs believe that people are influenced by brands they see integrated into content mediums.*

95% *of CMOs feel it is very important to engage with digital influencers on YouTube, Instagram and other digital properties.*

88% *of CMOs believe brand integrations are a very effective way to reach targeted audiences.*

(source: IPSOS study sponsored by BEN)

AD AVERSION AND CORD-CUTTING

Cord-cutting is happening at faster rates than expected. It is estimated that US pay TV viewers will decrease from ***50.8m*** *in* ***2016*** *to only* ***18.9m*** *in* ***2021.***

(source: eMarketer)

90% *of people skip pre-roll ads appearing ahead of online video content and TV shows.*

(source: ORC International)

71% *of US internet users felt that ads are more intrusive today than 3 years ago.*

(source: Kantar Millward Brown)

It is projected that **30%** *of US internet users will use an ad blocker this year. In 2017, that number was 23%.*

(source: ORC International)

BEN BY THE NUMBERS

80,000
The estimated addressable market for television integrations.

10,000
integrations during 2017, with only
1,500
of those paid integrations which represents only
1.9%
of the total brand integration opportunity.

3,000
Typical number of opportunities within BEN at any time.

BEN is projecting that it will place
6,000
brand integrations during 2018, worth
$1.2b
in media value.

(source: BEN Proprietary Research)

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THE BRAND INTEGRATION MOMENT IS NOW



The days of brand integration as a 'nice to have' are long gone. It is now a highly-viable, effective part of the marketing mix. Additionally, the fast-growing volume of content choice, scale and measurability combined with increasing use of ad blocking, illustrates that the space is ripe for brands to take full advantage early and often.

Brand integration has, and continues to be, an important staple of entertainment. Research indicates that the practice may have begun, at least on the big screen, as early as 1876 with Auguste and Louis Lumiere featuring Sunlight soap in their films.

In more recent eras, television and radio were rich grounds for brands with entire programs being underwritten by companies. In fact, it was Procter & Gamble whose sponsorship and production of daytime TV dramas helped coin the term 'soap operas' – entertaining audiences around the world and providing businesses a platform for brand messages.

Though those were mainly product sponsorships, the evolution of brand integration, especially within storylines, has evolved dramatically. There are plenty of gold standards often cited by fans and brand experts alike including Reese's Pieces in E.T., Wonder Bread in Talledega Nights and Eggo in Stranger Things. Yet there are thousands of integrations that may not have garnered as much press but prove highly effective.

Today, the sheer volume of choice, combined with the consumer desire to avoid advertising and the advent of streaming content, presents a unique and formidable opportunity for brands. A recent study by PQ Media shows that global branded entertainment revenues rose 8% in 2017, with double-digit growth in brand integration and placement.

Even with an ever-expanding content universe, Greg Isaacs, chief product and marketing officer at BEN, believes that the evolution of integration is "going back to the future in a way."

"I would argue that, while we might not have three 'networks' I do believe that there will be ten main players that really matter," he says.

Aside from more traditional networks, Isaacs believes that the likes of Netflix, YouTube, Amazon, HBO, Facebook and a smattering of others will emerge as the dominant players in the space.

"I also believe that we're going back to a world where integration matters most," Isaacs notes. "Integration, done well, is authentic and effective."

Outside of more traditional entertainment content, the emergence of influencers, a $570m market according to eMarketer, is yet another layer that brands can leverage and, according to Isaacs, will "continue to be hugely powerful."

The budget move to integration

Ricky Ray Butler, chief executive officer at BEN, has seen a consistent and progressive shift of budgets to brand integration. Though it is dependent on the brand, a recent development by Target underscores the importance and power of the practice.

In March, the brand worked with NBCUniversal on a full integration of the show Superstore in one episode. This complete takeover made a significant impact and Rick Gomez, executive vice president and chief marketing officer of Target saw the benefit. He said that: "To be an effective marketer, we have to be able to meet our guests where they are, and when it comes to broadcast, that can be challenging as the trend of ad-skipping increases,"

"We've seen strong results from our custom integrations, like the one we've created with NBCU for Superstore. In fact, they've proven more effective than a traditional TV spot," he adds.

Butler sees the largest brand budget shifts from experimental and television advertising.

"It's very brand-dependent but I think the big story is that money is shifting into integration, which is exciting."

Adds Aaron Frank, senior vice president, marketing, strategy and insights at BEN: "The shift is where integration isn't a 'nice to have' but a necessity in the marketing mix. And, as a brand, you can still be early enough that you can be a little bit of a trailblazer in the space and have competitive advantage."

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"The data that we've looked at shows that there are still 98% of available integration impressions not captured, meaning that no one is taking advantage of them. There's plenty of tonnage out there."

The evolving state of content and viewer habits

Indeed, the opportunity in front of brands in entertainment is vast and some brands are seizing the moment. According to BEN, 92% of the top 25 streaming shows in 2017 had brand integration. Standout examples include KFC in the highly-regarded Netflix series Stranger Things and Zillow in the network's Grace & Frankie franchise. Outside of streaming, in unscripted television, GoRVing partnered with Ellen DeGeneres for an extremely successful campaign.

Despite the high percentage of shows utilizing brand integration as a marketing tactic, Butler believes that the space remains nascent and there is ample room for brands to participate. Fox is reportedly exploring the possibility of shaving ad units to two minutes per hour, citing the ad-free streaming landscape. Additionally, 73% of viewers state that integrations are more intrusive than ads, presenting an argument for brands to get in sooner rather than later.

"The data that we've looked at shows that there are still 98% of available integration impressions not captured, meaning that no one is taking advantage of them," says Butler. "2% are being used, 98% are available and that doesn't include influencers. So there's plenty of tonnage out there and we've proven that we can execute against that."

Streaming, and especially binge-watching, is another new phenomenon that marketers are faced with, yet its relative 'newness' is not at all a disadvantage. According to research BEN conducts on a monthly basis, 70% of streaming audiences are binge-watching.

"For a brand, what that means is that it's not just about one moment," says Caressa Douglas, senior vice president of global strategic partnerships. "The recall and retention of a brand is greater because of this behavior."

Additionally, according to Douglas, audiences may not necessarily be watching the shows that have the biggest buzz or are considered most popular.

"Your audience may be somewhere else," she notes. "Which is why it's important to be diversified in brand integration."

Measurement matters more than ever

Much like the transformation of content itself, measurement is undergoing its own changes. Brand integration in the past was sometimes hard to measure, resulting in a brand's reticence to engage with the practice.

In today's digitally-led marketing environment, marketers understand the importance of metrics against KPIs – and can understand their return on investment. The good news in brand integration measurement is that it's happening quickly, utilizing tools that marketers are familiar with.

"There are a lot of different data sources out there," says Frank. "We use Nielsen for television and Rentrak for film among other sources. As an entrepreneurial company we have great depth in our proprietary research and data. Netflix, Amazon and other large streaming players don't release much data at all. So, we've created online surveys to get a sense of the size of those audiences. We look at who is watching this particular content, their behaviors, bingeing habits and more."

Part of BEN's data evolution includes psychographic information, so brands can see which shows, especially in streaming, over-index against a specific audience a marketer would like to target.

"The holy grail for any brand is to be able to get straight line of sight to the right data," says Isaacs. "Our job is to pull all the best data sources as well as using our own capabilities to give a brand a clear picture."

Myths and misperceptions

Like any practice in marketing, brand integration has its own set of misperceptions, most of which are working from a dated model and demand further education.

The first is that brand integration is a vanity project – again, more of a 'nice to have' than a 'must have.' Quick to point out otherwise, Frank notes that being more data-driven shows that, in fact, brand integration is a viable, measurable part of marketing.

Another misconception is scalability. Often the thinking is that brand integration is about one-offs and big splashes when, in fact, the vast availability of opportunity addresses the need for tonnage.

Also, comparing impressions between an ad surrounding content and impressions from an integration are telling. In one example, each episode of CBS's wildly popular Big Bang Theory averaged 12m viewers during 2017. In comparison, the Netflix series 13 Reasons Why grew from 9.7m impressions in its first month to 23.7m in the second, 32.7m in the third, 43.2m in the fourth, 50m in the fifth and 56.3m in the sixth.



General Motors integration in Deadpool

"The holy grail for any brand is to be able to get straight line of sight to the right data."

"Integration really is the gift that keeps on giving," says Isaacs.

Control is another issue that pops up in discussion. Though brands don't necessarily control the content they are part of, content creators, according to Douglas, are "very savvy with how to work with brands and how to make sure that brands work for them in the best possible way. Our job is to match brands with the right content creators."

"You need to think like a marketer and act like a producer," adds Nathan Tan, associate director, brand partnerships and experiences at Cadillac. "For a marketer, you need to think about the content beyond the content itself. When it comes to creating, you need to be thinking like a producer. That's how you are going to create the best piece for yourself."

A further misperception is that of personal preference and comfort. While marketers may like a particular show or influencer – or may not be comfortable with certain types of content, as Frank says: "it's better to look at the data and see what the data is telling us related to the right audience."

"We were with Bill Gates (BEN's founder) and the topic of Narcos came up," recalls Isaacs. "We showed him that Tecate and Jose Cuervo were part of the series. Those are examples where no one would've ever considered integrations but we were able to do it and the brand benefited."

The new gold standard of integration

Though the classic examples of brand integration still retain their cache, a new generation of success stories emerges. And with over 65% of audiences skipping ads, getting inside content is the best way for brands to ensure that they are seen.

GM's support, with their GMC brand, is a consistently high performer.

"This integration is organic and authentic," says Rob Eric, chief creative officer at Scout Productions, the company that produces Queer Eye on Netflix. "It's probably one of the best we've done and holds up, even after 15 years."

A more recent example is Buick's integration in the HBO series Big Little Lies starring Reese Witherspoon, Nicole Kidman, Shailene Woodley and Laura Dern. Featuring their SUV has proven to be a big hit so far.

"It was an unexpected choice to have [Witherspoon] in that vehicle," says Frank. "What they are trying to do with those integrations is change perception of the brand from being mid-market to luxury. What our research shows is that these integrations can really change perception and it is an effective way to get people to look at that vehicle differently."

As the consumer landscape continues to change, expect more categories to embrace integration. Integrations from Zillow, Microsoft, beverage brand Proximo, Dyson and Ubisoft may not be getting the same publicity as the classic E.T. example, but the impact for brands is undeniable and becoming more important: gold standards for success.

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LEARNING THE LANDSCAPE

Success in brand integration demands a greater level of sophistication – and expectation. Whether in entertainment or the influencer space, the days of simply plopping in a product are long gone. In its place is an ecosystem that is exciting, and highly effective for brands, it's where consumers' eyeballs are and is more measurable than ever.

As brand integration sees the spotlight get brighter and hotter, one of the key considerations is determining the best first steps in taking advantage of this dynamic, growing marketing space.

Whether it's in traditional Hollywood-style entertainment or the continually emerging influencer space, one of the biggest issues that brands can face is a version of "shiny object syndrome."

"One of the most important things is to look at content objectively and not subjectively," says Erin Schmidt, executive vice president, global client services at BEN. "We all know the content that we like to watch, but that doesn't mean that's where you'll find the right consumers for your brand."

Indeed, even as shows like Stranger Things, Billions and House of Cards, or "hot" influencers like Liza Koshy, garner substantial attention, discipline in selecting who to work with is paramount. As entertainment and influencers work to capture culture and take advantage of today's zeitgeist, marketers are wise to learn about where their own brand can fit in well.

"Creators are experts at developing the exact content that people want to tune into and watch, whether that's on TV, streaming or through social channels with influencers," notes Schmidt. "With our technology, we can identify what content best fits a marketer's brand and objectives, and we help build their knowledge base."

Another critical component in preparation is the understanding that successful results come from a hybrid campaign approach that is fully optimized and built for the long-term, whether it's with scripted or unscripted entertainment or influencers.

Zillow is a particularly germane example. Early on in their successful integration program, the brand experimented with a range of executions including verbal mentions (a character saying the brand name), visuals (showing the brand in the content) and verbal/visual combinations (both).

"We researched the impact of each execution," says Schmidt. "What we learned is that the verbal mention was as impactful as the verbal/visual combo and that allowed us to work with the budget more effectively."

The continual optimization of the budget is not something that can necessarily be done in the short-term or as a one-off. Preparing for that contingency is important for brands to understand up front.

"To deliver multiple integrations, we look to capitalize on 6 to 12 month periods," notes Schmidt. "This mitigates any risk and also shows the creator community, especially in Hollywood, that a brand is committed, which always leads to incredible opportunities."

Partnership and support in the entertainment and influencer space can take many forms – from in-kind to direct financial support. Done in an authentic way, allowing creative talent to work their magic can yield substantial dividends.

Brands like Microsoft, General Motors and beverage brand Proximo are three long-term BEN and entertainment industry brands who have seen great success through expanding their knowledge base. Over the years, they have planned for the long-term, taken a hybrid approach and allowed the talent to do what they do best.

"These, and other brands, are synonymous within entertainment," says Schmidt. "People know they support the community and everyone from producers to writers wants to work with them because they are helping to enhance their product and output."

Microsoft integration in Hawaii Five-0



LONG-TERM VS ONE-OFF?

Though integration may be perceived as an area where brands can dabble, the fact is that marketers see a greater, more sustained benefit when looking longer-term. Like most practices in marketing, the misperception may be based on what was done in the past.

"We're all taught that campaigns are very structured with a defined timeline and lifecycle," says Stephanie Dade, senior vice president of global content and integrations at BEN. "Brand integration has traditionally been looked at as added value instead of a true component of the overall marketing mix and as a result, didn't receive the same prioritization."

As the landscape changes, with more options than ever and consumers continuing to avoid ads, integration, especially taking a long-term approach, makes more sense than ever.

"There's risk in one-offs," says Dade. "It may look, on paper, like it aligns with a campaign or launch. But there's a great deal of research that points to the value of frequency, seeing a product multiple times over the course of a season. The product needs to be seen as a part of the story, not as a distraction from it."

Indeed, if a brand looks to shoehorn themselves into content, especially entertainment, that lack of authenticity can stick out – and not necessarily in the best way.

When done right, in a true long-term partnership, brands stand to benefit due to building trust with creators, who may be more willing to feature products in storylines more often. Even in unscripted content, long-term success has been evident in many places.

"When brands are considering integrations, they need to look for producers who will be brand partners," says Jordan Passon, director, product placement and integrations at Microsoft. "Finding partners that really believe brands should be in service to the storytelling, and not the other way around."

"I think most people had a different view of Ford after they partnered with American Idol," adds Dade. "It was a good example of a brand taking a risk early and then building a long-term partnership."

Additionally, brands that offer expertise to a production can often build a critical rapport that results in greater opportunities. One of the more prominent brands that uses long-term thinking to great effect is Microsoft. Although initially perceived as a Hollywood outsider, a great depth of trust has been built over the years and they are now looked to as critical partners.

"They've always come to the table with solutions for the producers, directors, writers – in truth, they actively support all of the creative community," notes Dade, who first worked with the brand on Smallville during her time with Warner Bros Television and helped introduce Surface tablets on Grey's Anatomy, contemporizing Seattle Grace's characters who used to carry binders.

A long-term relationship has also borne substantial fruit for seven seasons on the CBS show Hawaii Five-O. Producers rely on the brand to not only provide product and software for the characters to use on-screen but also the most accurate and innovative features that can drive a more authentic and powerful storyline. Conversely, Microsoft supports both in-show and out-of-show activations, further extending the relationship.

"The Five-O team meets with the brand every season to immerse themselves in the latest and greatest that Microsoft has to offer – including at times, venturing to Seattle to experience the campus and meet the technologists who are driving the innovation and pushing boundaries. "They want to learn as much as they can so that they are able to showcase the products in the most innovative and authentic way possible while at the same time delivering a great episodic story for their audience" notes Dade. "I think this is an excellent illustration of what a successful long-term relationship looks like."

"There's risk in one-offs. There's a great deal of research that points to the value of frequency."



Dunkin' Donuts integration in Orange is the New Black

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THE CONTENT BLUEPRINT

When brands begin their integration journey in entertainment and the influencer spaces, preparation demands a blueprint that is clearly defined, yet affords a level of flexibility. With thousands of content options and opportunities available to a brand, developing the right approach to content can help build substantial success.

Up front, however, the strength of any long-standing relationship in the space demands a clear understanding of what success to the brand looks like.

"It's key for us to understand what success looks like to a brand," says Erin Schmidt, executive vice president, global client services at BEN. "But we also have to understand what it doesn't look like. What doesn't work for a CMO is just as important to know."

Establishing parameters also helps in determining the best brand/opportunity match. Taking it one step further, the continually developing technology and measurement standards at BEN helps improve the understanding of key categories, while leveraging long-standing relationships all in service to a brand's KPIs.

"It's science, then art, then back to science," notes Schmidt. "There's matching, then letting the creatives bring it all beautifully to life, then back to the science so that it all can be measured and optimized to meet a brand's objectives across platforms whether it's YouTube, film, television or influencers."

In developing a content plan, two areas that demand attention, like any marketing approach, are the options available and the associated risks. This is where BEN's experience, process, technology and understanding of brand integration come into play.

"It's easy to get overwhelmed by the sheer volume of content or influencers," says Schmidt. "Marketers use our technology platform and put a great deal of trust in us to give them the best recommendations. Having deep relationships with Hollywood producers, for example, allows us to find the right opportunities to meet the brand's objectives. The bottom line is that we always have the brand's best interest in mind."

In terms of alignment, in building a content plan, Schmidt advises brands to "not overthink it."

"You might think Modern Family is the best thing that could happen for your brand," she says. "But if there isn't a scripted moment that's the right fit for you, it could be highly counter-productive – and there are thousands of other shows that may provide a better opportunity to align."

A good example of timing and alignment in action is one of BEN's newer clients, Prego. The brand was looking to time their integration in the key areas of fall and winter. Additionally, up front, the brand said that their main KPI was the "family meal moment," where characters were enjoying a meal together, showing the authenticity of the brand.

The brand approved a long list of opportunities and BEN delivered "family meal moments" by finding producers that were most passionate. "The producers of Scorpion loved Prego and found a moment in the script that worked," said Schmidt. The overall campaign includes integrations on Scorpion, Mom, American Housewife and The Big Bang Theory, long a highly-rated program.

"It's a great campaign that aligned perfectly with the brand's KPIs," notes Schmidt. "We were able to deliver excellent results based on a client aligning with our systems and processes."

"It's key for us to understand what success looks like to a brand. But we also have to understand what it doesn't look like. What doesn't work for a CMO is just as important to know."



Prego integration in American Housewife



Live KFC integration with Jimmy Kimmel

CREATIVE COLLABORATION

When collaborating with talent on brand integration across the entertainment landscape, a key word that continues to emerge is 'authenticity.' For creators and storytellers, being authentic is critical as it avoids straying from and compromising carefully-crafted story arcs and character development.

But authenticity should be of critical importance to brands as well. Stories can be enhanced or character traits can be reinforced with a solid, well thought out and planned integration.

"Brands don't want to compromise their values by being in content that doesn't make sense," says Caressa Douglas, senior vice president of global strategic partnerships at BEN. "Being inauthentic can backfire and be considered disingenuous to the audience. It's disruptive to both the content and the brand – and not in a good way."

Creative collaboration, in large part, is built over time and through deep relationships. It also demands a keen understanding and trust of the creative process, especially in Hollywood and entertainment, whether that's in the scripted or unscripted space.

"It's so fascinating to see how a brand gets on screen," says Pattie Falch, brand director of Heineken's sponsorships and events. "Ultimately, [creators] can have a different vision for the character and the brand placement won't work. We've learned as a brand and as a team to be flexible."

"When we work with Jimmy Kimmel Live, for example, we know that they will craft something better than a brand could," adds Douglas. "They understand Jimmy and his audience best. That's why, as a brand, you want to be in that show – the writers do a great job."

Being an insider can give brands a massive leg up in pursuing opportunity as well.

"When we're developing projects for brands, we know, from industry insiders, our research and sometimes gut instinct, which shows or series will be great and what won't make sense," says Douglas. "It can be overwhelming with all of the choices in content and having a resource to navigate the landscape is helpful."

Creators also understand the inherent value brands can bring to a production budget, whether it's direct or in-kind. Additionally, as it relates to safety for a brand, long-established creators and experts like Douglas, who has over 20 years of successful experience in brand integration, understand where balance can be struck. "Creators and storytellers want to do right by brands," says Douglas. "In my career, I've seen that producers and productions want to continue having relationships with brands because they want to be able to come back, project after project, to get support. For our part, we adhere to brand safety for clients. It's paramount."

Making some early bets on production and talent can yield substantial dividends as well. Though it's enticing for brands to pursue hugely popular titles or franchises, first-run, independent or new productions can be more cost-effective, yet powerful in the long-term.

General Motors, for example, supported Jerry Bruckheimer's earlier films by loaning cars. This early support has resulted in ongoing, successful collaborations. The James Bond franchise has helped a number of brands achieve massive exposure, in part because of established relationships dating back to the franchise's inception.

"The more the production understands the brand, the more they will write them into the story," notes Douglas. "It's important to work with creators when they're starting out. It can lead to some of a brand's most valuable relationships."

"Creators and storytellers want to do right by brands."



Baby Bjorn integration in Lethal Weapon

ENJOY THE RIDE

The scope and scale of brand integration, especially in Hollywood, can be overwhelming. As deals get done, there are many requisite planning and execution steps. But a key aspect of entertainment, and one that is sometimes forgotten, is how fun working with some of the brightest and most creative minds can be.

From the brand side, participating in the fast-paced world of storytelling can be a rush.

"It's very fun," says Caressa Douglas, senior vice president of global strategic partnerships at BEN. "Especially when you get into a room of really high-energy creatives who have an idea."

On the other side of the creative table, there is mutual respect and excitement about the attributes brands offer to enhance a story. And their participation is not lost, even among the stars of some productions.

"I think all of our brand partners, at some point, feel that energy," says Erin Schmidt, executive vice president, global client services at BEN. "I was on the set of Scorpion for our Prego client and [show star] Katharine McPhee came up to me and gave me a big hug, telling me how much she loves Prego. The brand was ecstatic hearing that."

Matt Miller, producer of the Fox TV show Lethal Weapon, is another example of how much creators value the relationships built with brands.

"My experience [in brand integration], has been very good," he says. "I've only had positive experiences because I know what I'm getting into and I want to do it. It helps me and helps the show."

Citing the show's relationship with Microsoft, Miller points to the brand's willingness to collaborate as a major plus.

"We have a great time working with them," he says. "They'll sometimes say, 'can this character do this?' and we will say, 'maybe that wouldn't make sense, but what if this character does it?' And that's almost always been sufficient for them, or they counter-pitch and it feels collaborative when you both understand [the goals together]."

Creativity, even in the unscripted space, is a welcome addition, especially between brands and content that, on paper, may not actually make sense. This challenge can open up connections through the collaborative process.

"A good example is Skype and MasterChef," says Tamaya Petteway, senior vice president of brand and licensing partnerships at Endemol Shine North America. "This show is all about cooking, but we created an integration where the junior contestants had tablets and used Skype to phone a friend or family member for tips and it became the hero of that challenge."

Through the process of working with brands, not only do producers and creators find unique opportunities, but valuable learning experiences that help them better understand expectations and how to work them into storylines.

"[An] integration with Target was the most educational," says Randall Winston, a longtime Hollywood producer with shows such as Grace & Frankie, Roseanne, Scrubs and Spin City under his belt. "There was a lot of back and forth about the brand's expectations and I learned a lot about the corporate needs because it was so multi-layered."

In the final analysis, though, bringing together talent and brands through integration remains a special relationship that all find mutually beneficial and exciting, as Schmidt puts it, for the long-haul.

"There's nothing else in advertising and marketing like it," she says. "I love working with brands and creators, and we've all worked together to deliver some of the most meaningful integrations of all-time."

"I love working with brands and creators, and we've all worked together to deliver some of the most meaningful integrations of all-time."

BURNING QUESTIONS ANSWERED

As brands assess their marketing mix and the associated opportunities in front of them, brand integration continues to climb up the list of considerations. For those that are engaged in the practice of entertainment marketing, the benefits, when done well, are obvious.

According to Ricky Ray Butler, chief executive officer of BEN, the trends in brand integration, in both traditional entertainment and the influencer space, have sparked marketers' curiosity.

"More brands are doing their homework to see if integration works," he says. "Where our brand partners are doing well is due to the fact that they can see the data and the positive engagement that it brings to their brand."

That said, Butler, who started with integration in the influencer space in the early years as founder of Plaid Social Labs, notes that there are still lingering questions from marketers who want to fully understand integration's value vis-a-vis more traditional advertising and marketing.

Usually, the first question a brand marketer asks is "how do I know this is going to work?" Indeed, the perception of brand integration has its history in smaller players. Today, a much higher level of sophistication is a result of a marketer's need for clarity and ROI.

"We tell brands that they need to be data-driven and think about scale, the same way they would think about any other marketing tactic," says Butler. "We're accountable as an organization, and we're going to give guaranteed metrics and goals for a brand's KPIs. The integration space is actually quite new, and we're one of the first to bring data science and sophistication to the table."

In BEN's experience, integration results are strong. On YouTube, for example, they see click-through rates of around 3%. With Instagram, and especially Instagram Stories, those rates average around 11% for ongoing campaigns, well above most forms of online advertising. With traditional TV integrations, brands have seen double digit percentage jumps in brand opinion and consideration.

Another question that comes up from marketers is around control. While brands wish to have a level of control, the fact is that trust becomes critical between the brand, creator and BEN. The more trust that is built, the more authentic the content. The more authentic the content, the better the engagement.

"The more natural it is, the easier it is to work into the story," says Lesley Chilcott, Academy Award-winning documentarian for An Inconvenient Truth. "The toughest things for brands to understand is that their brand can't be front-and-center because the audience trusts the story less. If it's integrated seamlessly, the audience is being entertained."

"There is a difference between organic integration and being invisible. It's striking that balance to be visible and additive to the creative," adds Nathan Tan, associate director, brand partnerships and experiences at Cadillac.

Another frequent question from brands that arises is around the future of brand integration. "The silos between how people are viewing content are collapsing," says Butler. "People are watching across devices and platforms – all forms of content are blending together."

What's telling is that the lines between social influencers and celebrities are also blurring, especially in the last year. Influencers are becoming bigger and bigger, and people are taking note.

"Celebrities have learned from the YouTubers and Instagrammers," says Butler. "They need to be looked at more as media now. But they also want to be creators, and this is where brands have a better opportunity than ever before."

"We tell brands that they need to be data-driven and think about scale, the same way they would about any other marketing."



Hardee's integration in Stranger Things

THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO BRAND INTEGRATION

Like any form of marketing, brand integration has its own set of "dos" and "don'ts." The practice is nuanced and creative yet data now plays an increasingly pivotal role. There is plenty to learn, and these tips can help brands prepare to set themselves up for massive success.

DOS

LEARN **THE FULL BREADTH OF THE BRAND INTEGRATION SPACE.** Big-time Hollywood film and TV productions are great, but there are huge opportunities in smaller and more niche productions and projects.

UNDERSTAND **THE POWER AND SCALE OF INFLUENCERS – FROM THOSE WITH LARGE AUDIENCES TO MICRO-INFLUENCERS.** It's a wide field to play from and knowing the lay of the land makes a difference.

BE WILLING **TO GIVE CONTENT CREATORS AND TALENT THE OPPORTUNITY TO DO WHAT THEY DO BEST.** Trust that they will always be in service to your brand. They understand that you have goals and KPIs and take it seriously.

BUILD **RELATIONSHIPS WITH CONTENT CREATORS EARLY IN THEIR CAREERS.** Supporting producers and influencers when they are first getting started can reap long-term benefits. Some of the most impressive relationships started from the ground floor.

EXPECT **REAL, TANGIBLE DATA FROM YOUR BRAND INTEGRATION EFFORTS.** It can (and should) be measured and match your ROI and KPIs. Demand the numbers that you need to be successful in the space.

THINK **OF BRAND INTEGRATION AS A VIABLE, LONG-TERM PART OF YOUR MARKETING MIX.** You'll see how far integration has come and how much opportunity there is for brands that commit.

BE WILLING **TO LET GO OF YOUR PRECONCEIVED IDEAS ON WHAT WILL WORK.** Be objective. Have an open mind. Use the left part of your brain a little, it can pay big dividends.

ENJOY **THE PROCESS.** There is nothing like brand integration. It's one of the most exciting and dynamic ways to market and the relationships you will build can last forever.



DON'Ts

RESIST **THE URGE TO DO AN INTEGRATION WITH A SHOW THAT YOU LIKE OR YOU HEARD IS "HOT."** There are thousands of opportunities that you may have never heard of that can offer valuable impressions with your target audience and will drive your brand forward.

AVOID **ONE-OFFS.** They can be expensive and give your brand a "sugar rush" but it's not a sustainable, profitable practice.

DO NOT **IMPOSE UPON THE CREATIVE PROCESS.** Creative talent knows what makes a great story and how your brand can be an important enhancement.

NEVER **HOLD BACK WHEN EXPLAINING EVERY ASPECT OF YOUR BRAND OR PRODUCT.** That brand attribute that you think isn't important could be a boon to a creator. Surprisingly, creative people can be "brand nerds" and find interesting stories in the small things.

DON'T **LIMIT YOURSELF ON PLATFORMS.** You will find out that a combination of TV, Instagram, YouTube and film is exactly what your brand needs. Or, there may be a new platform that is right for your brand.

DON'T **LIMIT YOURSELF CREATIVELY.** A show may not necessarily seem "brand safe" on paper, but could pay huge dividends for your brand – and there are many examples of this in every aspect of brand integration.

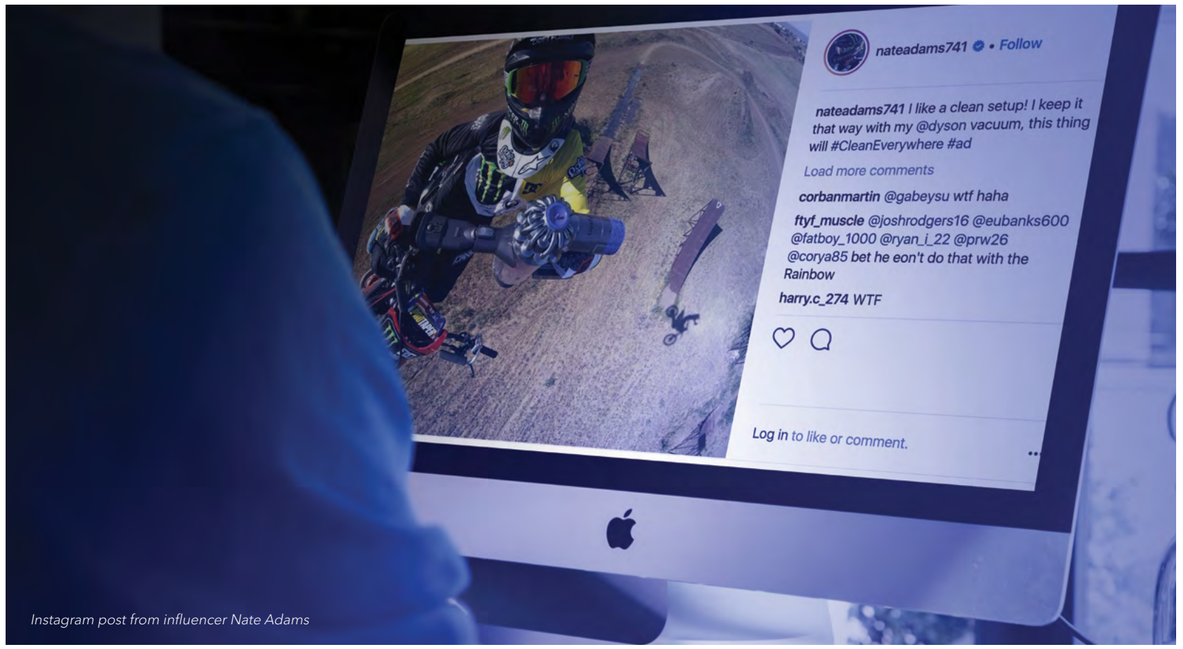
NEVER **JUDGE SUCCESS BY A SINGLE INTEGRATION – GOOD OR BAD.** As with any marketing campaign, some integrations will naturally perform better than others. You can often learn as much from the integrations that only delivered mild success as you can from the ones that blew the doors off.

THEDRUM.COM

THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO BRAND INTEGRATION

THE ESSENTIAL INFLUENCER

Every brand marketer has heard how influencers can change the game. But what is the current state of affairs with influencer marketing? What began as an interesting addition is now a vital part of the marketing mix, continually evolving to higher levels of measurement and sophistication.



Instagram post from influencer Nate Adams

Today, influencer marketing is continuing its spirited pace and upward arc. From celebrities to influencers – including those with large, scaled audiences to emerging micro-influencers, who pack a real punch with audiences – the landscape continues to widen and presents an even more robust opportunity for marketers.

A Linqia study of close to 200 marketers in the US showed that almost 40% will increase their influencer marketing budget in 2018. Additionally more than half said that influencer content outperforms brand-created content.

"I think that every CMO and brand needs to be involved with influencer marketing," says Jake Maughan, executive vice president of campaign execution and integration at BEN. "It has become so essential that they will have a big hole in their marketing plan if they overlook leveraging influencers for their objectives."

Indeed, it is hard to miss some of the more prominent stars of social media. The likes of Lily Singh, Lele Pons, Dude Perfect and Vanoss have followings that rival some of the world's biggest traditional celebrities – and even some of broadcast's biggest TV shows.

"The gap between celebrities and influencers is closing very quickly," notes Maughan. "There's really no difference in the online platform marketing space – and the cost is becoming very similar as well."

Though there is a consistent surge of new platforms that pop up in the landscape, there are some that remain more tried-and-true, including YouTube, Facebook, Instagram and Twitch.tv.

"New platforms will come and go, and they don't always succeed," says Brad Davis, senior director of influencer integration at BEN. "A select few end up doing okay but talent usually ends up migrating over to the juggernauts like YouTube and Instagram."

"We're seeing a huge surge with Instagram, especially with Instagram Stories," adds Maughan.

Other platforms that Maughan and Davis are watching closely include China-based messaging and social app WeChat, microblogging site Weibo and Musical.ly, a social network app for video creation and live broadcasting.

To that point, geography is a consideration in the influencer space as well. While the English-speaking world dominated for years, other areas of the world are catching up – and quickly.

"This is one of the big opportunities over the next few years," says Davis.

"It's becoming prime real estate, so to speak, for marketers and marketing opportunities," adds Maughan.

"I think that every CMO and brand needs to be involved with influencer marketing."

Misconceptions

There are some broad misunderstandings about influencer marketing, and particularly around the best strategic approaches for working with influencer talent.

"An influencer is both the production of the content as well as the media distribution," says Davis. "It's common for a brand to treat them as one or the other."

"Also, brands have to understand that the influencer already has a following and their own unique brand and style, and the marketer is tapping into that," adds Maughan. "Brands that take our advice and know how to empower the content and work with the influencer, rather than trying to control a lot of these elements, see great success in influencer marketing."

Though there is a foreign feel of 'letting go,' for brands, relying on talent's discretion is the best course of action in developing successful campaigns.

"Trust that influencer – the creator," says musician and YouTuber Peter Hollens. "[They are] a brand and know how to speak to their audience."

Additionally, marketers tend to look at influencers as more of a broad category when, in fact, just like any other marketing practice, understanding the whole landscape is critical to brand success.

"The space is huge," notes Davis who, with his team, has access to thousands of some of the world's most prominent and effective influencers. "But there are different genres to think about and different influencers have a better ability to convert to different brand objectives."

"Don't only focus on the people on top. You can probably get just as much or more value from a thousand smaller channels than one big channel," notes Hollens.

Another fallacy is that a one-and-done approach can get the job done effectively for brands. The notion that a big check and ephemeral splash can build long-term brand success is a huge misnomer.

"You need to have a diversified portfolio of the types of influencer programs you run," says Davis. "The reality is that you need to diversify just like any other form of marketing as there could be ups and downs, and particular areas of strength with each approach."

Far from the "Wild West"

Much of the modus operandi in influencer marketing appears to be stuck in a time warp – one that implies recklessness by creators and influencers. For its part, BEN has a long-standing, stringent set of guidelines and processes that ensures quality and safety.

"Influencer marketing is highly-regulated by the Federal Trade Commission (FTC)," says Maughan. "We take that seriously. Every piece of content that comes through our doors – and that we work on – passes through three different pairs of eyes, including a compliance officer to make sure the FTC regulations are adhered to."

But it's not just the FTC rules that are under the microscope, the same rigor applies in service to BEN's brand partners.

"We take the same care with branding requirements and guidelines so that we're not getting a piece of content that goes live without being fully aligned to a brand's objectives as well," adds Maughan.

BEN's process also includes what is called a 'consensus triangle' to ensure full alignment between viewers, the influencer and the brand.

"These three parties all have a stake in the content and need to reach a consensus that will, again, empower the creative process," notes Maughan.

One brand that uses the process to its advantage is Dyson. In a past campaign touting cord-free vacuums, which encouraged influencers to find the most creative place to clean, both the brand and talent engaged X-Games athlete Nate Adams and worked together to create content that fit both the brand and athlete. The content on Instagram, showing the athlete flying through the air with the product, generated significant engagement and excitement from the audience.

"It's a great example of how to use that consensus triangle to empower the content," says Maughan.

For their part, influencers find that working with brands is an enjoyable experience and opens up a mutually beneficial opportunity unique in marketing.

"I love working with brands for a lot of different reasons," says King of Random, another popular YouTuber. "When they reach out to me with their product, my mind instantly goes into creative mode. What can I do with this? What can I make out of it? I love thinking outside of the box, and brands not only help me think outside of the box, but they also help fund the projects that I'm doing and help keep everything alive."

INFLUENCER DOs AND DON'Ts

DO

- Trust the talent.
- Work with the influencer to empower content instead of control it.
- Understand FTC guidelines and rules.
- Build a long-term plan and scaled influencer portfolio.
- Know the backgrounds of influencers and the genres in which they excel.
- Understand what a micro-influencer can do to help your brand.

DON'T

- Try to over-control the process.
- Remove the human element entirely, automation is crucial for some aspects in the process – but take the time to craft well.
- Make decisions based on emotion or one specific influencer.
- Dabble – make the commitment as it will pay off.



Instagram post from influencer Jeff Lewis

DYSON GOES CORD-FREE, CROSS-PLATFORM

Dyson is long an innovative brand leader – and is not shy about sharing its technology. From its early days, the brand has found unique ways to not just sell products, but evangelize about what the right tech can do to transform how people clean.

Sensing an opportunity to tout its cordless technology in 2017, the goal was not just about what was in the machine, but what it does to change consumer perceptions around cleaning.

The key to success relied on ongoing awareness, over multiple platforms and opportunities.

To that end, BEN took a wide approach, engaging the brand in entertainment (both scripted and unscripted), influencers and custom digital content. Additionally, amplification occurred in key brand tentpole seasons including spring, Mother's Day and Black Friday.

In entertainment, the brand was integrated in Million Dollar Listings, Big Bang Theory, SMILF, Flipping Out, One Mississippi, Portlandia and Girl Meets World, among others.

Influencers played a pivotal role, with the likes of Blair Fowler, Linus Tech Tips, Jeff Lewis, Guavaroi, Cody, Missy Lanning and Tanner Guzzy, among others peppering the landscape with highly inventive, creative content that swept the space by storm.

RESULTS

80m
TOTAL IMPRESSIONS

442%
ROI ON MEDIA SPEND

8.5m
INFLUENCER IMPRESSIONS

PROXIMO GETS VERTICAL

Proximo occupies a significant space in beverage brands. From legendary products like Cuervo and Bushmills, to new classics like Hangar 1 and Kraken, their portfolio is not only impressive, but tailor-made for entertainment.

With that in mind, BEN's deep roots, experience and success in entertainment provided a solid foundation from which to build. BEN recommended a comprehensive cross-platform approach. Strategically, the plan was to secure premium integrations in all entertainment verticals, including influencers.

Music entertainment was a rich opportunity with Three Olives making an appearance in DNCE's Kissing Strangers music video and 1800 Tequila featured in A$AP Ferg's New Level music video. BEN further extended the brand with a custom influencer event activation at Coachella with Halsey and DNCE.

Additionally, custom digital content for Kraken Rum with influencer platform Legendary Digital Networks and bespoke influencer work with Jose Cuervo for Dia de Los Muertos significantly amplified the portfolio's presence.

Scripted and unscripted integration included: Grace & Frankie, Marvel's Iron Fist, XX (film), Superior Donuts, Billions, Real Housewives of Beverly Hills, The Young Pope, Crazy Ex-Girlfriend, Marvel's Agents of SHIELD, Six, Rosewood, Sneaky Pete, The Real Housewives of Atlanta and One Day at a Time.

All-in, Proximo netted over 1.2bn impressions, showing that an integrated, vertical approach can be a wild success.

RESULTS

850m
TV AND FILM IMPRESSIONS

220m
INFLUENCER IMPRESSIONS

118m
MUSIC VIDEO IMPRESSIONS

Three Olives integration at Coachella with artist / influencer Halsey



GENERAL MOTORS DRIVES FORWARD

General Motors (GM) has long led the brand integration space with a steady presence across the entertainment landscape. The venerable automaker's 30+ year partnership with BEN has helped develop pre-eminence in the space among consumers and creators.

To that end, in 2017 BEN worked diligently with each major GM brand to deliver an extensive brand integration programme that secured prominent brand exposure through film, television, premium cable, streaming television and influencer social channels.

Targeting hero auto moments that align with each brand's strategy, the wide-ranging programme displaced competitive brands through savvy, relevant and seamless integration.

Working deeply within the production community, BEN secured close to 500 integrations including: Transformers 5 (the entire GM vehicle line), HBO's Big Little Lies (Buick Enclave), Netflix's Queer Eye (GMC Sierra) and many others. In the digital space, BEN executed multiple influencer 'road trips' including a memorable Buick trip to Coachella.

Additionally, BEN executed custom research for specific integrations to measure and showcase the value, efficacy and ROI for GM campaigns.

RESULTS

484
INTEGRATIONS IN 2017

3.1bn
IMPRESSIONS



General Motors integration in Transformers 5



YouTube Influencer, CaRt0oNz

UBISOFT LEVERAGES INFLUENCERS FOR NEW GAME

Ubisoft's Far Cry 5 game was a highly-anticipated new title from the game-maker. From pre-launch to release day and beyond, the game's success hinged on driving awareness and engagement at key pulse points during the game's lifetime.

To that end, Ubisoft leaned heavily on influencers for a multi-stage campaign. At the popular E3 expo, the world's top trade show for computer and video games, BEN tasked top gamers like Dashie, Cart0onz, and Wildcat to promote the game on Instagram and Twitter. Providing early access gameplay to top influencers created another layer of anticipation.

One month prior to launch, 16 YouTube channels were invited to a ranch outside of San Francisco for a live experience, mirroring game play. The resulting Instagram Stories creative content further enhanced excitement around the game.

At Far Cry 5's launch, 19 influencers created at least one YouTube video documenting their enjoyment of playing the game. Those videos were pushed out, encouraging viewers to preview the game themselves.

The post-launch effort included a program on popular streaming platform Twitch.tv, to build even more engagement among the gaming community in order to drive purchase of the game's expansion downloadable content.

RESULTS

200
PIECES OF SHAREABLE CONTENT

23m
IMPRESSIONS

1.4m
ENGAGEMENTS

BEN

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